

LATE TESTIMONY

House of Representatives
Committee on Human Services and Housing
Date: March 20, 2008
Time: 9:30 AM
Conference Room 329

Testimony in support of House Concurrent Resolution 174

Aloha! Representative Shimabukuro and Committee Members.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HCR 174.

In January, 2006 Na Kupuna O Wai'anae introduced The Native Hawaiian Child Welfare Act to this legislative body and have worked diligently toward its passage to prevent the involuntary termination of parental rights of native children and families. This bill is predicated upon two of the most important concepts of Native Hawaiian customary practices and traditions: Ho'oponopono, a philosophy of spiritual healing to preserve the unity of family life and our Hanai system which protects the sanctity of family connections.

In recognition of this importance, the Department of Human Services extended its assistance to Na Kupuna O Wai'anae by making every effort to place children with family first, then with native families as secondary preference, thus embracing the cultural interests of the child into "best interests" practice.

With the cooperation and partnership of DHS, Na Kupuna Tribunal has intervened successfully as advocates in Family Court in Hawai'i, California, Utah and Arizona where reunification of the family unit is the primary goal instead of an afterthought.

We have a long way to go, however, passage of this resolution will facilitate the work ahead of us. Therefore, Na Kupuna Tribunal strongly supports HCR 174.

Mahalo.

Maile K Hallums, Leo Hano
Na Kupuna Tribunal

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Good morning, Representative Shimabukuro and Committee Members:

My name is Colleen Tinoga, Vice-President of the Legacy Coalition which supports the work and philosophy of Na Kupuna O Wai'anae.

The Legacy Coalition recognizes the importance of this measure and supports its intent. It is timely and urgent that we begin the process to stop the involuntary termination of parental rights of native families. It is time that we stop penalizing children by the destruction of their families, creating a generation of anger and rebellion.

We recommend that this task force be led by Na Kupuna O Wai'anae because of its experience in the field and its collaborative efforts with the Department of Human Services over the past two years. We further recommend that this committee consider the possibility of appointing Na Kupuna Tribunal as guardian ad-litem for native children and that this tribunal be assisted in its work by the Family Court as well as DHS.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our mana'o in this matter.

Colleen Tinoga, Vice-President
Legacy Coalition